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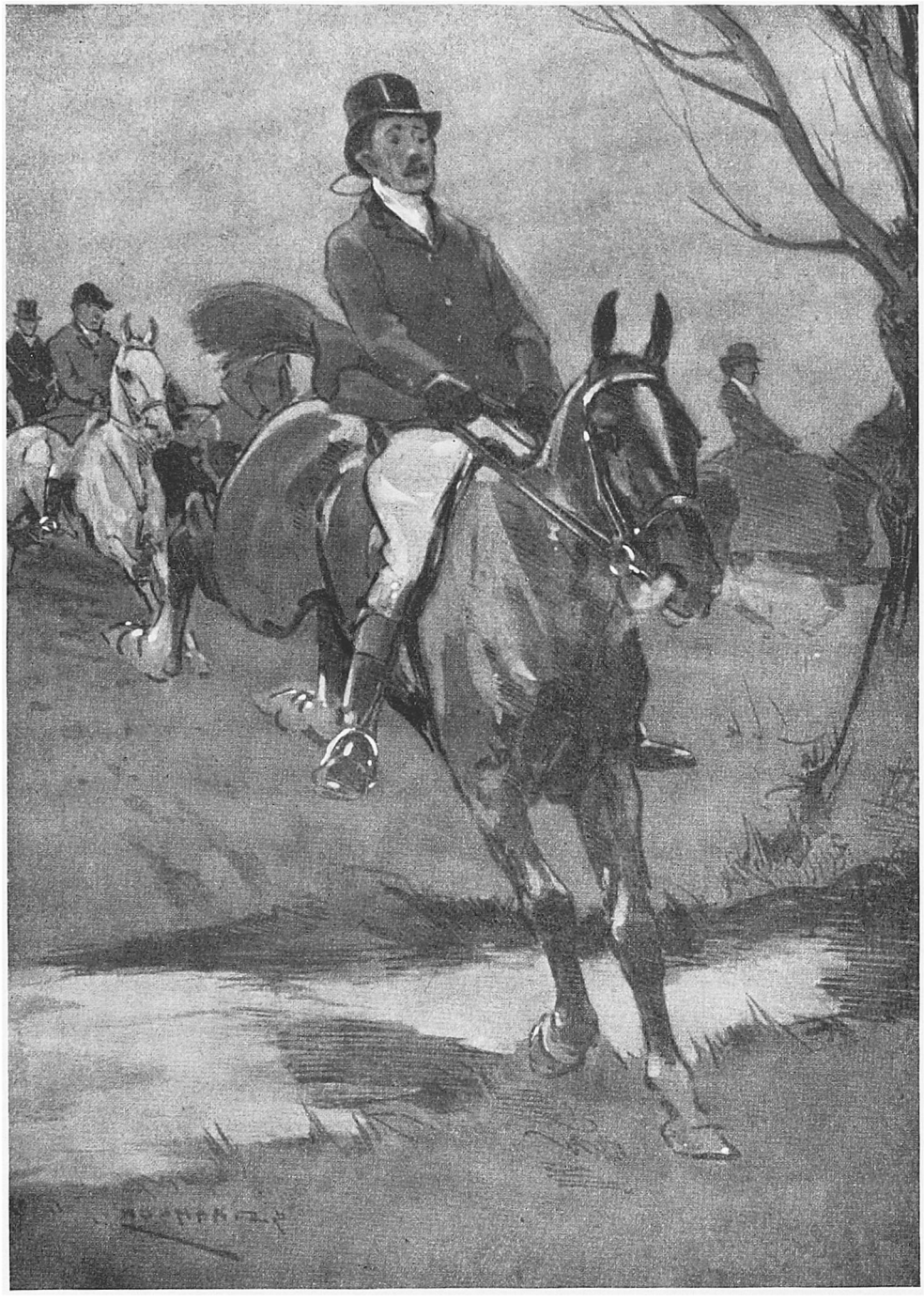

"JUMPING THE BROOK"
Painting by G. D. Armour

THE LOTUS MAGAZINE

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STRAY NOTES ON FOX HUNTING

FRANKLY, I never knew that Charles Kingsley had written an account of a fox hunt. Clergymen have ridden to hounds, been in at the death and maybe even carried off the brush, but here is a canon of the church rivalling, in descriptive ecstacy, the famous Peter Beckford, the first real litérateur of the hunt, a first edition of whose "Thoughts on Hunting" (1781) is prized by collectors and sells at well up in the pounds sterling. However, write on fox hunting the author of "Hypathia" did. What he wrote "broke cover" as I was looking through "My Winter Garden." I was idly turning the pages, then suddenly found myself baying like any hound with joy as the fox, as yet unfrightened, trotted into view "lifting his toes delicately, and carrying his brush aloft."

But there are other discoveries in the hunting field—discoveries at every turn. For example, one discovers in Mr. G. Denholm Armour a capital illustrator of the fox hunt in action, as of other out-of-door sports. Jorrocks is an immortal creation of Surtees. In the old days "Phiz," Alken and Leech tried their hand on this famous character in sporting fiction ("Jorrock's Jaunts and Jollities" and "Handley Cross.") The difficulty (and expense) of securing the old illustrations doubtless inspired the idea of enshrining Jorrocks in a volume with new pictures by Mr. Armour, whose work is also found in Mr. E. D. Cuming's "British Sport: Past and Present." In looking over this and other recent authorities on sport, it has interested me to note, how, like THE LOTUS in its articles on fox hunting, these writers have given liberal quotations—much of the same material, in fact, as THE LOTUS—from Beckford and Nimrod. The reason is obvious. No finer literary material on fox hunting is to be found or evolved—although, space permitting, THE LOTUS may employ the present opportunity to establish Kingsley also as a hunt classic.

From the time when riding to hounds was recognized as a gentleman's sport, it has been associated in the minds of English sportsmen as splendid training for the mounted service. In America, too, it will be found that many members of our crack militia cavalry units are members of hunts. The idea

once sedulously fostered, however, will hardly hold good after the present war. The only cavalry charge on a large scale that appears to have been attempted on the Western front, met with disaster as the result of barbed wire entanglements. Riding to hounds may as well be cultivated for its own self.

Have you ever considered how far a fox may run and for how long a time he may elude hounds and riders before he is pulled down? Some runs have been so long in miles and hours that they have become matters of record. Such was the famous Charlton run of 26th January, 1738, when the hounds found a vixen at 7.45 a. m. and killed her at 5.50 p. m., having covered a distance conscientiously affirmed to be a trifle more than 58 miles.

In this country an average run to a live fox might be an hour; and there might well be a difference in this respect when covert is drawn for a real wild fox or when a bagman has been turned out—*i.e.*, when a fox that has been caught, frequently when young or at most half-grown, is brought to the meet in a bag and turned out with a certain number of minutes' "law." It is necessary to turn out bagged foxes in this country far more frequently than in England, where wild foxes abound. But the custom is not, as many mistakenly think, of American origin. The English sporting ethics of a century ago were lenient on the subject of bagmen. If the owner of a pack wanted to hunt any particular district and foxes happened to be scarce therein, he might temporarily stock the country without reproach. This is shown by an item in the Sporting Magazine for December, 1807, where it is said, casually, that "Mr. Fermor's excellent pack is come, or coming at the end of this month, from his seat in Oxfordshire to Epsom, for the purpose of hunting there during the remainder of the season. The gentlemen of Surrey expect much sport, as Mr. Fermor will turn out a great number of bagged foxes." It is also known that when Squire Osbaldeston hunted in Suffolk, season 1822-3, half-grown foxes were bought for him in Tottenham Court Road, at thirty shillings a brace, and sent down in a covered cart, ten or twelve brace at a time. Not only was it very usual to turn out a bagman for a day's sport, but such a fox often gave a much better run than a wild fox. The Master of the Chester Harriers had a bag fox turned out in Common Wood at a quarter-past noon, with five minutes' law. Reynard was run to ground at Pick Hill, was bolted, and thereafter stood up before hounds till dark, when hounds were called off by the New Mills near Whitchurch. The whole chase was computed to be upwards of forty miles as the crow flies, and with scarcely a check. Mention of bag foxes recalls a comical story told of Tom Hills, a famous Old Surrey huntsman.

He was carrying home, in the capacious pocket of his blouse, a fox he had been sent to buy in Leadenhall market. Stopped by a highwayman on Streatham Common, he responded to the demand for his money by bidding his assailant help himself from the pocket which contained the fox: and while the highwayman was bewailing his severely bitten fingers, Hills made his escape.

The run which the bagman gave the

Chester Harrier is one of the record runs to be found in the hunt statistics. This subject of record runs being one that rarely, if ever, has been taken note of in America, is worth considering. Mr. Cumings gives three instances on as many different pages of "Fox and Hounds," but also groups ten great runs in the order of their occurrence. One of the isolated runs noted is that of Mr. Corbet's hounds, who "found" near Wellesbourne pastures, ran their fox for three hours with one five minutes' check, and killed—nay, "most delightfully ran into" him at Weston, about a mile from Broadway: a sixteen-mile point. Of a field of nearly a hundred "eager amateurs of fox-hunting," fifteen were up or in view at the kill. This was December 7, 1807.

The ten record runs that Mr. Cumings has grouped, cover a period from 1837 to 1903. Not only are the dates given, but in the majority of instances both the distance and duration of run.

17th March 1837.—Mr. Delmé Radcliffe's Wendover Run. Found at Kensworth at half-past two, ran their fox to Hampden and lost him at dusk: 2 hours 35 minutes: 18½ miles point to point. 26 as hounds ran. Fox found dead in a rick yard next morning.

9th February 1849.—The Old Findon (Surrey.) Ran their fox 45 miles in 4 hours 50 minutes: last 22 miles nearly straight: killed in Dorking Glory, Surrey.

2nd February 1866.—The Pytchley, Waterloo Run. Found in Waterloo Gorse at five minutes past two, ran to Blatston: 3 hours 45 minutes: whipped off in the dark at 5.30. 13 couples of hounds up of 17½ out. It is proper to state that Mr. Robert Fellowes, who rode in this run, thinks it much overrated: "hounds were continually changing foxes and were never near catching one of them. It was only a journey."

3rd February 1868.—The Meynell, Radbourne Run. Found in the Rough: fast but erratic run to near Biggin, 3 hours 37 minutes: 36 miles: fox believed to have been knocked over when dead beat by a farmer.

22nd February 1871.—Duke of Beaufort's Greatwood Run. Found Gretenham Great Wood: marked to the ground on Swindon side of Highworth: 14 miles point to point: 28 miles as hounds ran. 3 hours 30 minutes.

16th February 1872.—Mr. Chaworth Musters's Harlequin Run. Found in the Harlequin Gorse, Ratcliffe-on-Trent: ran very straight to Hoton Spinney and back to beyond Kinmoulton Woods. Killed. Over 35 miles: 3 hours 26 minutes. 15½ couples of hounds up of 17½ out.

9th February 1881.—Mr. Rolleston's Lowdham Run. Found in Hallougton Wood: ran 16 miles to Eakring Brales: 12 mile point, gave up at dusk: very fast all the way, but time not recorded. Dead fox found in Eakring Brales two days after.

1st December 1888.—The Grafton, Brafield Run. Found in Brafield Furze on Mr. Christopher Smythe's property: ran perfectly straight for 8 miles: turned left-handed and killed after another 50 minutes' fast hunting. Every hound up.

14th December 1894.—The Quorn, Barkby Holt Run. Found in Barkby Holt: 27 miles in 2 hours 5 minutes to ground in Bolt Wood. Grass all the way: very fast: horses stopping in every field.

2nd January 1899.—The Craven Sydmonton Run. Found in Sydmonton Big Wood. Hounds stopped at Tubbs Copse near Bramley Station. 10 miles point to point: 20 miles as hounds ran. First ten miles so fast nobody could get near hounds.

27th March 1903.—The Quorn Barkby Holt Run. 12 miles to just short of Oakham Pastures. Killed.

Whether after long runs or short runs, foxes have been discovered and killed or left in strange places. One was found on the housekeeper's bed upstairs, Catas Farm, near Heather, Leicestershire, late in October or early in November 1864, and was clubbed while asleep by a waggoner. Kitchen of a builder at Wetherby, Bramham Moor, killed 31st May 1875; took refuge beside a ploughman and his team, November 1899; killed in Broughton Astley Church, near Leicester, while congregation was assembling, Friday, 12th August 1900; down farmhouse chimney from the roof, fire raked out, and left by Essex and Suffolk, 26th December 1903; mineral water factory, whose employes usurped function of hounds and lost, Atherstone, March 1904.

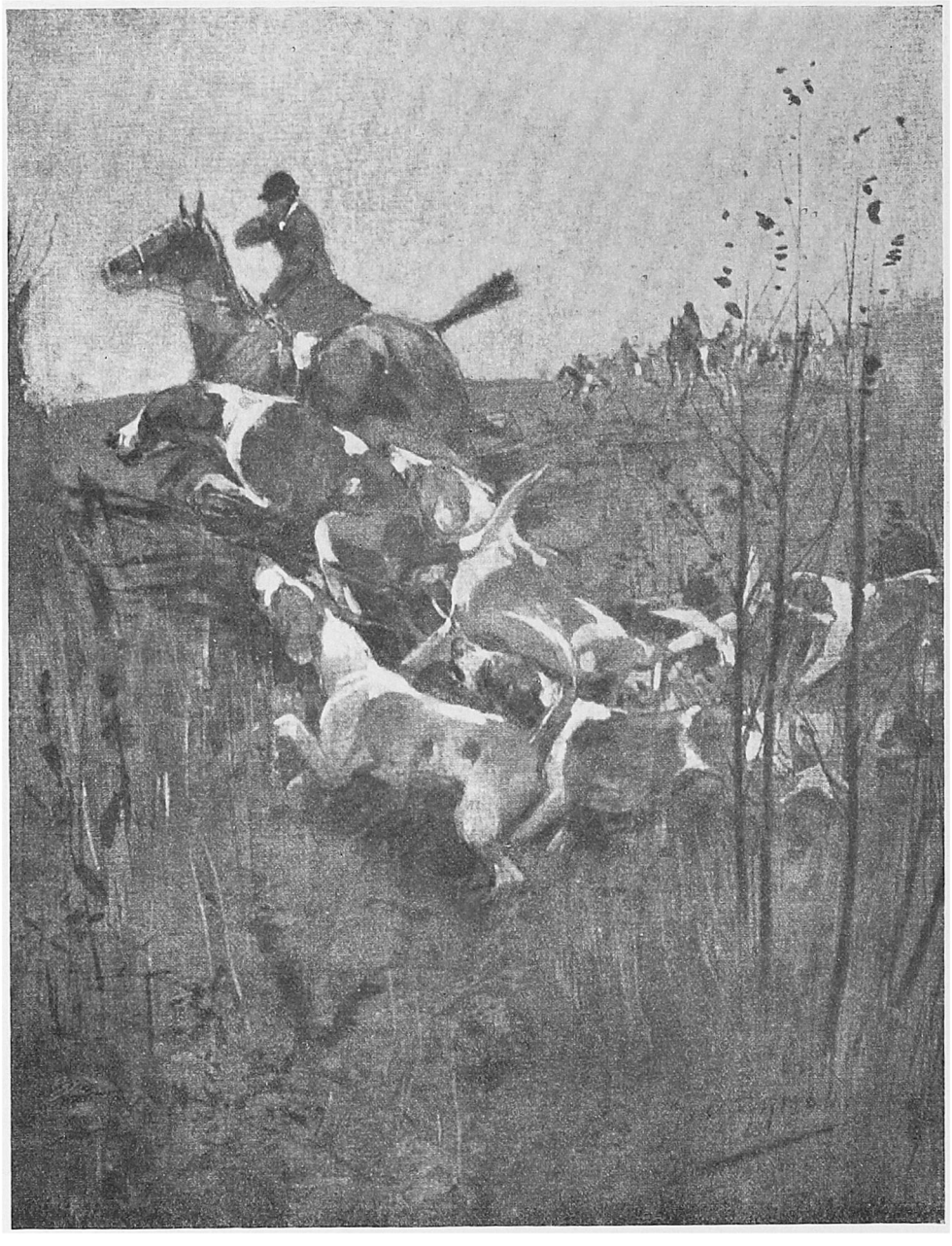
I have seen a picture by Mr. Armour, which shows a fox up a tree, from which Reynard appears to be prepared to drop, if necessary. Indeed the height from which a fox can drop without hurting himself is extraordinary. The greatest drop mentioned by Mr. Cuming occurred on the 19th February 1886, in the Blackmore Vale country. The second whipper-in ascended the slightly slanting elm up which the fox, helped by ivy, had climbed. The fox eventually went nearly to the top, and as it was thought he must fall and be killed when he tried to get down, he was dislodged. He dropped a distance of forty-four feet, falling on his nose and chest, but stood up before hounds for two miles before they killed him.

The average weight of the fox is put at from 11 to 14 lbs., and of a vixen, 9 to 12 lbs. All the heaviest foxes recorded have been fell foxes. The biggest actually weighed was killed by the Ullswater on Cross Fell Range. Its weight was 23 lbs., its measurements four feet four inches from tip to tip. In March, 1874, a bagman turned out at Palmer Flat, Aysgarth, Yorkshire, was weighed alive and tallied 21 lbs. On 13th December, 1877, the Melbrake killed two foxes, 20¼ and 18½ lbs. On 4th January 1878 the Sinnington killed a 19½ lb. fox. "The fox that was too heavy for 20 lb. scale but was estimated to weigh 26 lbs., must be regretfully omitted from the list," adds Mr. Cuming.

In Nimrod's essay an utter spirit of abandon is reached when the pace becomes "too good to enquire" the details of accidents that are reported on the run. Two horses are seen loose in the distance—a report is flying about that one of the field is badly hurt, and something is heard of a collar-bone being broken, others say it is a leg; but the pace is too good to enquire. A cracking of rails is now heard, and one gentleman's horse is to be seen resting, nearly balanced, across one of them, his rider being on his back in the ditch, which is on the landing side. "Who is he?" says Lord Brudenel to Jack Stevens. "Can't tell, my Lord; but I thought it was a queerish place when I came over it before him." It is

evidently a case of peril, but the pace is too good to afford help.

"Who is that under his horse in the brook?" enquires that good sportsman Biddulph is here, and here he means to be!" "Only Dick Christian," answers Lord Forester, "and it is nothing new to him." "But he'll be



"Forrard Away." Painting by G. D. Armour

and fine rider, Mr. Green of Rolleston, whose noted old mare has just skimmed over the water like a swallow on a summer's evening. "It's Middleton Biddulph," says one. "Pardon me," cries Mr. Middleton Biddulph; "Middleton drowned," exclaims Lord Kinnaird. "I shouldn't wonder," observes Mr. William Coke. But the pace is too good to enquire.

Thus Nimrod. Now by contrast the polished Kingsley—in part only, of

course. He is first speaking of the fox.

"One moment he sits down to meditate, and scratches those trusty counsellors, his ears, as if he would tear them off, 'revolving swift thoughts in a crafty mind.' He has settled it now. He is up and off—and at what a pace! Out of the way, Fauns and Hamadryads, if any be left in the forest. What a pace! And with what a grace beside!

Oh Reinecke, beautiful thou art, of a surety, in spite of thy great naughtiness. Art thou some fallen spirit, doomed to be hunted for thy sins in this life, and in some future life rewarded for thy swiftness, and grace, and cunning by being made a very messenger of immortals? Who knows? Not I. I am rising fast to Pistol's vein. Shall I ejaculate? Shall I notify? Shall I awaken the echoes? Shall I break the grand silence by that scream which the vulgar view-halloo call? It is needless; for louder and louder every moment swells up a sound which makes my heart leap into my mouth, and my mare into the air. . . .

And now appear, dim at first and distant, but brightening and nearing fast, many a right good fellow and many a right good horse. I know three out of the four of them, their private histories, the private histories of their horses; and could tell you many a good story of them: but shall not, being an English gentleman, and not an American litérateur. They are not very clever, or very learned or very anything, except gallant men: but they are good enough company for me, or any one; and each has his own spécialité, for which I like him. That huntsman I have known for fifteen years, and sat many an hour beside his father's deathbed. I am a godfather to that whip's child, I have seen the servants of the hunt, as I have seen the hounds grow up round me for two generations, and I look on them as old friends, and like to look into their brave, honest, weather-beaten faces. That red coat there, I knew him when he was a school-boy; and now he is a captain in the guards, and won his Victoria Cross at Inkermann: that bright green coat is the best farmer, as well as the hardest rider for many a mile round; one who plays, as he works, with all his might, and might have made a beau sabreur and colonel of dragoons. So might that black coat, who now brews good beer, and stands up for the poor at the Board of Guardians, and rides, like the green coat, as well as he works. That other black coat is a county banker: but he knows more of the fox than the fox knows of himself, and where the hounds are, there will he be this day. That red coat has hunted kangaroo in Australia; that one has—but what matter to you who each man is? Enough that each can tell me a good story, welcome me cheerfully, and give me out here, in the wild forest, the wholesome feeling of being at home among friends.

And am I going with them?

Over a stiff furze-grown bank, which one has to jump on and off—if one can; and over the turnip patch, breathless.

Now we are at the brook, dyke, lode, drain, or whatever you call it. Much as I value agricultural improvements, I wish its making had been postponed for at least this one year.

Shall we race at it, as at Rosy or Wissendine, and so over in one long stride? Would that we could! But racing at it is impossible; for we stagger up to

it almost knee-deep of newly-cut yellow clay, with a foul runnel at the bottom. The brave green coat finds a practicable place, our Master another; and both jump, not over, but in; and then out again, not by a leap, but by clawings as of a gigantic cat. The second whip goes in before me, and somehow vanishes headlong. I see the water shoot up from under his shoulders full ten feet high, and his horse sitting disconsolate on his tail at the bottom, like a great dog. However they are up again and out, painted of a fair raw-ochre hue; and I have to follow in fear and trembling, expecting to be painted in like wise.

However 'all things do end,' as Carlyle pithily remarks somewhere in his 'French Revolution;' and so does this bog. I wish this gallop would end too. How long have we been going? There is no time to take out a watch; but I fancy the mare flags: I am sure my back aches with standing in my stirrups. I become desponding. I am sure I shall never see this fox killed; sure I shall not keep up five minutes longer; sure I shall have a fall soon; sure I shall ruin the mare's fetlocks in the ruts. I am bored. I wish it was all over, and I safe at home in bed. Then why do I not stop? I cannot tell. That thud, thud, thud, through moss and mire has become an element of my being, a temporary necessity, and go I must. I do not ride the mare; the Wild Huntsman, invisible to me, rides her; and I, like Bürger's 'Lenore,' am carried on in spite of myself, 'tramp, tramp, along the land, splash, splash, along the sea.'"

I think the distinction between the English gentleman and the American litérateur, given fairly early in the above extract from Kingsley, is a keen thrust. Nevertheless, whatever the canon may have thought of the American litérateur, he did not disdain to come over here later on a lecture tour, and gather in the American coin.

AMERICAN RUNS WITH FOX AND DRAG

LONG runs abroad are spoken of in the foregoing article. Mr. Richard Newton, Jr., painter-laureat of American fox-hunters, and himself master of the Suffolk Hunt Club, Southampton, L. I., supplies some interesting notes on runs here, including information on runs with a drag.

A long run after a live fox occurred on January 11th, 1915, at Middleburg, Virginia, with the red pack of the Piedmont hounds. At ten o'clock in the morning the field met at Gorse Creek, and after working the country until one o'clock in the afternoon they jumped a fox. This fox was in view many times. The hounds ran him until five o'clock in the evening, at which time it became so dark that the master, D. C. Sands, whipped off his pack and returned to the kennels without a kill. In a field of over thirty, Mr. Sands was the only man with the hounds at the last, and he only managed to do so by getting a fresh horse at three o'clock that had been waiting for a friend. This gentleman had been thrown and badly hurt. One horse could never have "lived"